

## Mount St. Helens Joint Information Center

Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters

10600 NE 51<sup>st</sup> Circle, 360-891-5180

### **Mount St. Helens Update**

VANCOUVER, Wash., October 8, 2004, 12:00 noon

Current status is: Volcano Advisory (Alert Level 2); aviation color code: ORANGE

#### **Mount St. Helens Volcano Activity**

Seismic activity continues to be at a low-to-moderate rate with an overall trend of slightly decreasing energy releases over the past 24 hours. Earthquakes are occurring at a rate of 1- 2 per minute with the largest magnitudes about M1.5.

Yesterday, USGS field crews reported a new vent near the two that have been present for several days. They also reported that there has not been noticeable additional uplift of the south part of the dome and adjacent glacier in the past 24 hours.

USGS is awaiting results of the gas-sensing and thermal imaging flights that occurred late yesterday afternoon. There will be limited work in the field today due to inclement weather. Field crews today will mostly work on enhancing data links between field stations and the Cascades Volcano Observatory.

As a result of the intense unrest during the past week, USGS infers that magma is at a very shallow level. During times of unrest, Mount St. Helens and other similar volcanoes, typically go through episodic changes in level of unrest over periods of days, to weeks, or even months. Such changes are in part driven by variations in the rate of magma movement. USGS expects fluctuations in the level of unrest to continue during coming days. Escalation in the degree of unrest and/or an eruption could occur suddenly or with very little warning.

Wind forecasts from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), combined with eruption models, show that winds during the morning will be from the south-southwest and any ash will drift north-northeast. The National Weather Service is forecasting a weather front that could bring more than one inch of rain to the mountains.

USGS anticipates that such intense rain could trigger small to moderate debris flows in the crater that may flow out onto the Pumice Plain.

USGS continues to monitor the situation closely and will issue additional updates and changes in alert level as warranted. USGS works closely with the US Forest Service and other agencies in monitoring alert levels. Public safety is the first priority.

The Unified Command of the Emergency Coordination Center for the Mt. St. Helens incident will continue to assess areas currently closed to the public and will monitor and coordinate between many agencies to protect public safety. The Unified Command is comprised of the USGS, the USDA Forest Service, federal, state and counties. *All areas currently closed will remain closed until further notice.*

### **Area, Road, and Trail Closures**

There is a 5 mile area closure from the crater of Mount St. Helens. This includes Ape Cave, near Cougar (south of the mountain), and the Mt. Margaret back country located north of Spirit Lake and east of Coldwater Lake. Mount St. Helens is closed to climbing. Lava Canyon Recreation Area and Windy Ridge Viewpoint are also closed.

Current road closures include State Route 504, at the Coldwater Ridge Visitor Center intersection to the Johnston Ridge Observatory, which remains closed. This section of SR 504 will remain closed until the USDA Forest Service indicates it is safe to reopen. Road closures are in place to protect public safety. Forest Road 81 is closed between Kalama Horse Camp and Cougar Snow-Park. Forest Road 99 is closed at milepost 10 at Cascade Peaks. Forest Road 8303 is closed at the Trail of Two Forests. Forest Road 83 is closed at the Cougar Snow Park.

Current trail closures include all trails accessed from Kalama Horse Camp, Forest Road 81 and 83, including #184-Lava Canyon, #207-Truman, #216-Loowit, #216A-Ptarmigan, #227-Independence Pass, #234-Ape Canyon, #237-Blue Lake, #238-Toutle, #240-Sheep Canyon, #229-Hummocks, #211-Birth of a Lakes, and #224-Harmony, #230, #230A- South Coldwater and #1 Boundary Trail east of trail #229 and west of Norway Pass.

### **Mount St. Helens Emergency Coordination Center and Joint Information Center**

Information is provided by the Unified Command of the Emergency Coordination Center for Mount St. Helens is based on information from the United States Geological Survey, the United States Forest Service, and state and local counties.

Cooperating agencies to the Joint Information Center include: Washington Department of Revenue; the Washington State Governor's Office; USDA Forest Service; DOI Bureau of Land Management; US Geological Service; Washington Department of Emergency Services; Federal Emergency Management Agency; Washington Department of Natural Resources/Geology Division and Pacific Cascade Region; Clark County Health Department; Skamania County Health Department; Cowlitz County; Clark County; Pierce county; Cascade Volcano Observatory; US Coast Guard; City of Portland; Oregon Department of Corrections; Clackamas County Sheriff; Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue; and the Shriners Hospital, City of Lake Oswego.

The Cascades Volcanic Observatory is open to media for Photography and video only of the seismographs and other instruments between 4:50 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. and from 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. No interviews will be allowed so scientists can focus on their duties. The Observatory is

-more-

located at 1300 S.E. Cardinal Court, near 164<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Tech Center Drive.

The Joint Information Center (JIC) is located at the USDA Forest Service Gifford Pinchot National Forest Headquarters, 10600 NE 51<sup>st</sup> Circle, Vancouver, WA. Media can call (360) 891-5180 to reach JIC staff. A conference bridge is also available for the briefing. To access the conference bridge, call (210) 234-9881 and enter pin number 96721#.

- **New**-A daily press conference will be held at the Headquarters office of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest at **10:30 a.m. for Saturday, Sunday, and Monday.**
- **New**-The JIC will currently be staffed from **7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.**
- **New**-Until further notice, the USGS Cascades Volcano Observatory will be open normal business hours. This applies to the seismograph in the lobby area.

# # #